THE FOOD NOT BOMBS MOVEMENT STATEMENT OF NONVIOLENCE

All Food Not Bombs volunteers work for nonviolent social change and this is our statement.

The name Food Not Bombs states our most fundamental principle: That our society needs things that give life not things that give death. Our society is dominated by violence and the threat of violence. This affects us both in our daily lives through the constant threat of crime and police abuse and less directly but just as seriously through the threat of total annihilation from nuclear war. The authority and power of our government are predicated on the threat and use of violence. They continue to spend more time and resources developing, using, and threatening to use weapons of massive human and planetary destruction than on nurturing and celebrating life. Food Not Bombs has chosen to take a stand against violence. As a group of individuals we are committed to non-violent social change through the celebration and nurturing of life by giving out free vegetarian food.

Poverty is violence. By spending money on bombs instead of addressing human needs, our government perpetuates and exacerbates the violence of poverty in our society. One of the most direct physical expressions of the violence of poverty is hunger. Millions of Americans go hungry every day and childhood malnutrition contributes heavily to infant mortality rates, which are higher in parts of the U.S. than in some Third World nations. Inadequate or non-existent health care, police brutality, and class discrimination are also forms of systemic violence against poor people. Poverty is also a key factor in the level of interpersonal violence. It can drive down people's self-esteem, causing people to lash out in the form of domestic violence and violent street crime. The violence of poverty also becomes internalized which can result in addictive behavior and suicide.

Food Not Bombs responds to the problems of poverty and self-esteem in two ways. First, we provide food to whomever wants it in an open respectful way. We don't make people jump through any bureaucratic hoops that are designed to control and often punish people for being poor. Secondly, we invite people who eat with us to be involved in providing the food themselves. This helps people to regain a feeling of their own power and their ability to change their situation.

The food we serve also expresses our commitment to non-violence. Mainstream food production is an inherently violent process involving the slaughtering of millions of animals, the death of an estimated 10,000 field workers annually, and the poisoning of the air, water, soil, and our bodies with chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

Food Not Bombs is providing a service to people that attempts to address some very serious problems at no cost to the government. For some reason, sone cities have chosen to use violence to try and stop us. In these cities police are routinely used in large numbers to take our food and equipment; arrest, threaten, and/or beat-up our members. In this way they reinforce the violence of the State in the face of ever growing human needs. It is extremely important that we respond to these attacks in a non-violent manner which is consistent with our views of human value. It is never in our interest to use violence against the state, or other humans. In practical terms the state is capable of mustering significantly more violent force than we are so we risk our own safety from further, more intense police violence. More philosophically, we don't want to be in the position of recreating the power of the state in our own efforts for social change. We want to create a society based on human rights and human needs; not on the threat and use of violence.

Food Not Bombs works hard to prevent violence within our own community by ensuring that food is never used as a weapon against anyone. At demonstrations and our daily servings we concentrate on serving food in a peaceful and respectful manner, thereby creating a safe environment for people to eat in. The food we serve embodies our commitment to non-violence in so many ways. It is a humane response to poverty, a means of empowering people and is ecologically safe.

San Francisco Food Not Bombs adopted this statement after months of deliberation in 1993 building on the movement's first thirteen years of commitment to nonviolent social change. The statement was adopted by the movement at the 1995 International Food Not Bombs Gathering in San Francisco.

FOOD NOT BOMBS
P.O. Box 424
Arroyo Seco, NM 87514 USA
575-776-3880
www.foodnotbombs.net